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Subject: Inheritance of the Meek.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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INHERITANCE OF THE MEEK.

"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."—MATT. V. 5.

When our Lord spoke this, the whole world was apparently a witness against its truth. If one looked back from his point of time, the Oriental monarchies had existed in a state of almost continual war. The Persian dynasty had rolled its armies like waves over all the East. Of all forms of violence, none is more physical and brutal than military. Against the Persian, came the Grecian hosts; and, like a counter-tide from a stormier ocean, drove back and overwhelmed the violence of the Persian. Then the Roman Empire overthrew and dominated all governments; and at the time of Christ it was the one supreme power on the earth. And surely, it was not the *meekness* of Rome, then or since, which caused it to inherit the earth.

Palestine was in the hands of Roman governors, and was torn by factions, and was bubbling and overflowing like a crater, with incessant revolutionary outbreak. If there was any one thing in all the world which was sure of gaining universal control, it was cunning and violence. If there was one quality which was sure of being trodden down and despised, it was meekness. The extraordinary prophecy of Christ, "It shall inherit the earth,"—any thing but that! Had he said that if one withdrew himself from among men he would be happier in meekness, living by himself, that we should have understood. Had he said that meekness should inherit the world to come, or that it should give to the soul more true joy than victorious violence could do, or that it should be better than all other possessions, we should not have wondered. The one unlikely, if not impossible thing—that meekness should yet possess and govern the earth—was selected by our Saviour, and declared as a prophecy. And there stood that quiet prophecy, amidst the thunder of the universal battle that was then going on over all the earth.

Had the air been filled with eagles and vultures and hawks among which Jesus threw up a white dove, saying, "Blessed be the dove, it shall rule all the air," it would scarcely have seemed more strange. Had he sent a little lamb into the wilderness among the bears, and wolves,

and lions, saying, "It shall go forth and prevail against them all," it would not have seemed more unlikely of accomplishment. Had he taken a sucking child from its mother's arms and appointed it ruler over warriors, or the beasts of the wilderness, it would have been no less reasonable. And yet, our Lord had only to go back to the prophecies which respected himself, to find every one of these figures expressly employed, in spirit at least, for the very same end,—as we shall find in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah:

"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Let us, then, consider what is the full drift of this single announcement,—*"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."*

I begin by saying that meekness is not a faculty. It is not a single attribute of the soul. It is a state or condition of the whole mind. It is produced by the complete ascendancy of the highest moral feelings in our nature.

There are three generic conditions under which a man may hold his soul.

The first is where those instincts and passions which belong to our animal nature, and whose normal sphere is upon the material globe, predominate, and give tone to character. Under such circumstances, men are always sensual,—fleshly, in scripture language. They live by the force of their material organization.

But as men come under better influences, there grows up an intermediate state, a mixed character, in which force alternates with higher and better feelings. Under great excitement, the physical qualities predominate; but in times of quiet, and away from temptation, there grow up milder influences, nobler sentiments. The result is that there is an occasional outburst of feeling, and also an occasional experience of sweetness and peace. It is, in such circumstances, an alternating condition of the mind, which results in great strife and conflict between the one part and the other—between the higher and the lower nature. And the greater part of men in civilized countries live in this intermediate condition, in which the animal is not predominant, and in which the spiritual is not predominant, but in which sometimes one and sometimes the other rules, neither having free course.

Then there is a final state—the highest we know of—that in which the moral sentiments completely rule. Where these higher qualities

give expression to the whole life—to the face, to the tone of voice, to the language; where they surround the very soul, as with an atmosphere; where the whole nature is saturated with faith, hope, love—with truth, equity, benevolence—there is an air given to men, of strength in gentleness, of courage in sweetness, of activity in tranquillity, of will without obstinacy, of self-confidence without conceit. All these qualities may exist in the individual, and over them all there shall be a luminous refinement, a spiritual glow, which saves the soul from the charge of insipidity and flatness, and gives it authority and vitality. When the soul is completely under the dominion of these spiritual emotions, it shines. It impresses all that come near it. It rules whatever is within its sphere. In short, the spiritual is to become supreme in authority. And that which makes *us men*—not that which makes us animals—gives color and tone to the whole life and character.

It is the atmosphere of the spiritual nature of man, or that appearance and those qualities which we see when the man is under the complete control of his higher moral sentiments, which is meant, by *meekness*. If you attempt to give a description of meekness you will certainly fail; because no word can define it. It is so comprehensive and so varying that you can only describe the circumstances under which it takes place; and those circumstances are that luminousness, that gentleness, that sweetness, that vitality, and that beauty, which act when the higher sentiments completely rule in a man, and give their natural language to his body, to his face, to everything that belongs to him.

To say that meekness shall inherit the earth, is to say that meekness is the strongest element in man; or that man, when he is disclosed in this manner,—when he is in great power, and when that power is of his higher moral sentiments,—is then in a condition of superiority. It is to say, in other words, that a man whose moral sentiments guide him wholly, is a stronger creature than that man whose basilar sentiments guide him wholly; and that mankind, when they shall come into the possession of these moral states, will dominate all lower states.

What I understand to be the scope of this declaration of Christ—"Blessed are the meek"—is, that the time is coming in which they shall inherit the earth. In other words, they are yet to govern. Manhood, when it comes out, comes out of its cruder conditions and lower states; manhood, when it begins to find itself, and take on its full divine forms; the ideal manhood—this so shows itself superior to everything beneath it, that to say that meekness shall rule, and that the meek shall inherit the earth, is to assert superiority in the true order of nature—it is to assert the superiority of the spiritual elements of

human nature over its lower passional elements. It is to declare that finally these elements which are superior shall, by virtue of their superiority, control the world.

The world has not been controlled by them thus far. Single families have. Occasional churches have. But no nation has. Neither has any department in any nation. The lower wisdom in many, which springs from passion, has governed the world, and still governs it. But a time is coming when men shall not laugh and scoff when we declare that the wisdom of conscience is better than the wisdom of pride; that the wisdom of love is better than the wisdom of selfishness; that the wisdom of faith, and of hope, and of the world to come, is better in the management of human affairs than the wisdom of the basilar and passional nature. The time is coming when men shall understand that they get better wisdom from the top of their head than from the bottom.

Hence, this declaration of our Master is not saying that now every man who is meek is going to possess the earth. Indeed, it does not mean possession in any such sense as that in which the word is used when we speak about a piece of ground which a man has in *fee simple*. It has no reference to the ownership of houses, and lands, and what not. It is *control*, rather than ownership, that is meant. And if you interpret this declaration to mean that one who has become truly meek, will, on that account, rise immediately above everybody else around about him, you will mistake its real import. Such a man will be superior to those around about him; but he will not be recognized as such by the community in which he dwells, until they have gone up so far in meekness that they can appreciate his superiority. Just so far as men are refined, they can appreciate refinement in others; but refinement among the Nootka Sound Indians is at a discount. They do not regard a man as superior who cannot fish and handle the bow and arrow. If he is merely refined and intellectual, they do not consider him superior to them.

This is the teleologic, and therefore the final condition. And the text simply declares the result which shall be achieved when the long battle is fought to victory. It simply states which part of the soul shall rule. It simply asserts what, when the long season is over, shall hang in ripeness and be gathered, and what shall be husk and chaff, and be burned up.

But even so explained, does it seem as though our Lord's words would ever come true? This is a day in which we are accustomed to speak of the influence of the divine nature—of our Master—on the world; but does it seem as if our Lord were gaining in the dominion of this world? There be many who think not. There be many who think religion is going backward. I am not of them. I believe reli-

gion is advancing. I believe it was never so deep, never so spiritual. I believe its claims were never so comprehensive in the recognition of men. I believe it was never so widely diffused. I believe it is taking other channels than the church. I believe there are other than ecclesiastical influences at work for its dissemination. If I believed that the Lord owned only Palestine, as the Jews did—or, in the modern version of it, that he owned only the church; if like our modern Christian Jews, I believed that all there was of Christ was inside of the church, I should mourn, with those who are assembled to-day to take counsel as to how they can withstand the incursions of free-thought and liberty. *Irreligion* they are pleased to call it; but I think it is no such thing. If we can discover what is the true order of nature in the unfolding and development of man, we shall then have a test by which to decide, not only whether the world is advancing, but whether the later developments are superior in power to the lower ones.

The unfolding of the human race, I need not say, at first is purely physical. Children are born as mere animals, and remain for a year or two as little animals. They are the most purely animals of anything that is born, at the beginning. The unfolding is gradual; and the order of it in the child is, first physical, then social, then nascently intellectual, and last of all moral. This last we hold to be the best, though it is the latest ripe. A child can walk and use its hands, and employ all its physical senses, before it has any social discriminations, affections, or instincts. Children begin to come along pretty soon; but they are very feeble at first. The child, little by little, in the ascending scale of development, begins to have intelligence, and soon knows the difference between friendliness and unfriendliness; and begins to live by its little tastes and affections. Still later the child begins to discriminate one thing from another—to perceive the differences of things. It rises, still later, to an understanding of cause and effect; to a perception of analogies; to the higher forms of intellectual discrimination. And last of all it comes to its moral nature. For children, in early life, are animals not only because they live by their animal functions, but because they have no moral sentiments. Men that are pure and noble as men, lied like witches when they were boys. Their moral nature was dormant—was not yet developed. This is the order which we see in the household; and it certainly is the order which is seen in history as well—for races have unfolded in precisely the same way.

And that which is true of individuals, is true of nations. They unfold first by physical force; next by social refinement; next by philosophies and higher ranges of intellection; and last, by moral elements—which yet linger all over the world. The last is the highest. It takes the longest to come to it; it takes the longest world-discipline to

bring it out. It is the latest to be born, not only in nations, but in the globe, as it is in the family and in the individual. But when it comes it shall be the best, as it shall be the strongest.

This is the order of value, as well as the order of time, in development—first physical, then social, then intellectual, and then moral. It is a rude classification; but it is sufficiently accurate for general purposes. It is the order of value, or of estimation, both in the individual's own consciousness, and among his friends.

Where men have been developed in physical, social and intellectual qualities, they themselves value those qualities in just that order. And they are the only ones that are competent to judge of them. But where men have been developed morally, as well as physically, socially and intellectually, not only they themselves, but all others—even those who have simply a rude, twilight understanding—are able to estimate that highest form of development.

Now and then an event occurs which develops the latent judgment of men in respect to this order of value. While I was yet a young man, living in Cincinnati, there came a wandering circus there, in which one of the principal athletes was a man built like a second Apollo. He was magnificent in every physical excellence, and as handsome as a god. A young lady of one of the very first families there, attracted by his beauty and grace, became enamored of him. He, of course, complimented, reciprocated this wild attachment. And in the enthusiasm and ardor of her unregulated and foolish affection, she proposed an elopement to him. Ordinarily, a man would have been more than proud—because she was heir to countless wealth, apparently, and certainly stood second to none there; but with an unexpected manliness, that surprised every one, he said to her, "No, I cannot afford to have you despise me. I am older than you are, and, although I am highly complimented and pleased, by-and-by you would reproach me, and say that I ought to have taught you better, and ought to have done otherwise. I will carry you back to your friends. I will not permit you to sacrifice yourself on me." And he refused to take advantage of the opportunity which she offered him.

Ten thousand men admired this man's athletic skill in the circus; but when that story was known, every one of them thought infinitely more of him than they did before. Here were two traits. First, there was the physical trait of grace and power as an athlete. Everybody admired that. But when there rose out of that this nobler trait—this disinterestedness, this magnanimity, this great and unexpected sense of justice and rectitude, and men saw it, they thought as much more of him as it was possible for them to think. And though, even in a rude class of the community, when a man addresses himself to the senses,

everybody admires him as an animal, yet if, at the same time, he develops a truly noble and manly trait, everybody feels, "How much higher that is!"

Because this man was a gymnast, everybody was enthusiastic over him; and afterwards, because he was a *man*, they recognized the manly element in him as nobler than the animal. So that once in a while, even in a rude state of community, among the commonest people, people of the least power of moral discrimination, if you present to them a case in which the contrast is strong and sharp between the higher and the lower, they appreciate it. All men's higher sentiments acknowledge that the higher element, not merely of reason or of obligation, but of loveliness, of desirableness, or of praiseworthiness, is the moral element, when they see the truth purely.

One trouble is that men hear a great deal about moral qualities, but do not see much of them. They hear ministers preach about them, they hear church-members talk about them, and they wish they could see them; but unfortunately moral qualities are largely in the ore; they are adulterated; they are in the dross; and people cannot see them. It is with them as it is with gold. Because they come in the ore, and not in bars, and with the image and superscription of God on them, men do not recognize them. But they will recognize them when they have a chance to see them. The rudest men recognize that there is an intrinsic superiority in the higher over the lower qualities of a man.

Even in barbarous times this has been so. If we examine those histories which run clear back to the earliest and fabulous periods, we find that the things which men have, as it were, carried in their bosom of bosoms, as mothers carry their babes, have not been the things which men did by physical violence. To be sure, Hercules, and Theseus, and Samson, and other such great, clumsy, coarse, brutal heroes, have had a place in the world's history; but, after all, there is nothing that shines with so pure and steady a light of universal admiration as the story of friends that died for each other; as the story of Lucrece, that would not live but in virtue; as the story of Curtius, who would gladly give his life for patriotism—for his country. These heroic and glorious acts of higher morality are, after all, the lamps which burn in the temple of history, and are fed by the admiration of mankind so that they never go out. And they show that even in rude ages, if you can bring clearly before men the higher exhibitions of human nature, in contrast with the lower, everybody recognizes them, everybody rejoices in them, everybody is enthusiastic over them.

Men run after physical things; they are excited to enthusiasm by them; but after enough time is given them for reflection, and they have come into their best moods, they still recognize, not, unfortunately,

in everything, but in enough things to show that they have the power of recognizing it, the superiority of the moral over all that is below it.

This, then, if you look at it narrowly or particularly, is after the order of historic development. Man is first low and animal. When he improves a little, he becomes social. When he improves still more, he becomes intellectual. When he improves more yet, he comes into the range of the higher moral sentiments. And true manhood is the blossom and fruit. When a man is developed in the higher elements, he is not strongest at the bottom; he is not strongest in the middle; he is strongest and noblest when he rises to that which comes latest, and with the most difficulty.

Men are by nature barbarians. By *barbarians*, we mean creatures, or people, that live by force alone, or principally. Then they become semi-civilized. And what we mean by a nation's being *semi-civilized*, is, that there is infused upon force a principle of refinement, both in morals and in civil and private administration; that men have a rational element added to the element of force. Then they become civilized. That is, so to say, they not only introduce a degree of rationality, but profess to be controlled by a principle of equity and refinement, as well as reason. And certainly, none will deny that a civilized man is more truly a man than one that is barbarous. And yet, he is only the seed.

Now take a civilized people, take men in civilized societies, and rank them according to the order of their moral development, and according to the sum of force which there is in their moral development. In a civilized community, when all excitement is gone, when time has been given for men's feelings to settle, he rises to the top, he stands highest, who exhibits the most of the moral elements.

In our own history, Aaron Burr was a keener thinker than George Washington. He was a far more ingenious man, a far more active man; and, if he had been a moral man, and had maintained normal relations with himself, with his fellow men, and with the laws of rectitude, he would have been an abler man. Washington was a man of good sense, but he was not a man of genius in any direction except that of conscience. He was a man of singular equity, of great disinterestedness, and of pure and upright intent. Sagacious he was, by the light which comes from integrity. He endured, having faith to believe that right was right, that right was safe, and that right in the end would prevail. That which made Washington the only great hero of our Revolutionary struggle, was the light of the moral element that was in him—not any intellectual genius which he possessed; not any peculiar social endowments; not any rare tact in administration, nor any remarkable executive power. And if you look back upon those names in our history that have best stood the test, you will find that

they have been men who were fruitful in the highest moral elements. And as time goes on, those men who lack these elements sink lower and lower till they set below the horizon; and those men who possess them rise higher and higher, till they reach the meridian, with undying splendor to shine upon history and the world.

So there is a rude judgment-day going on all the while; and all men's judgments, when they have time to think, are more and more concurring in this—that "the name of the wicked shall rot," and that "the memory of the just is blessed."

Here, then, we have a disclosure of the divine decree. We perceive that in the unfolding series, men are rising in value, power, and in beauty, just in proportion as they give strength to each successive section of their natures.

Men have supposed that to rise to our higher feelings, we must quench our lower feelings. No mistake could be greater. A true man is one who has physical power, social richness, intellectual acumen, *and* the moral elements. The moral elements are not at all antagonistic to any of these other forces. Once let a man be harmonious by giving the sway to his higher sentiments, and every part of him adds both to his strength and to his richness.

When the painter lays on the first and foundation colors, they are not to stand there crude and rude. He goes on with a thousand fine strokes, overlaying and overlaying them. What for? To wipe them out? No. They are the foundation which is to make the final picture stand. They give body to it; and, shining through, they give it a sort of subtle lustre which the surface-colors alone could not give. And so it is in true manhood. We rise higher than the basilar elements; but we never want them destroyed. We want the hidden power which they shoot up through. We want them to give energy, and breadth, and color, and warmth to all the moral sentiments.

When, therefore, a man becomes a perfect man, he is perfect in his lower nature, perfect in his social nature, perfect in his intellectual nature, and perfect in his moral nature—all the lower serving the higher, and the higher predominating, and giving an atmosphere of great power, and great peaceableness, and great manhood, and great blessedness therein.

Now, when a man is perfectly covered and filled with the perfection of these sweet and higher spiritual elements, he is meek. Some have supposed that a meek man was one who, when he was hit, just did not hit back. I despise such meekness as that. To be lean and rat-like, running round in the holes of life, is not to be meek. Meekness is that great luminousness which the complete ascendancy of all the higher and nobler instincts of man gives to the whole expression

of his life—to his eye, to his face, to his words, and to his deeds. It is the richness of the divine elements in a man that makes him illustrious and beautiful.

Christ was meek. "I am," he said, "meek and lowly." "Learn of me." Was there ever one who stood in more personal majesty than he did? Was there ever one who had more clearness of understanding than he had? Was there ever one who had more firmness of will than he had? Was there ever one who exhibited more significantly than he did the very pattern and ideal of perfect manhood? He was meek, because that which constitutes meekness is the full expression of the harmony of all the moral sentiments.

In view of this exposition, I remark,

1. The spread of Christ's kingdom is a very different thing from what materializing theologians have supposed. It is not overrunning the earth externally. This world might have a church in every village, with the Westminster Catechism, and as sound a preacher as ever preached from any pulpit; and every man, woman and child might be required to say the Catechism every day, and yet the whole set of them might be heathen; because it is not mere intellectual submission to certain views that makes the world Christian. The world is Christian just in the proportion in which, in its individuals, and in its communities, the higher elements of the human soul entirely dominate.

If you ask me whether, considered instrumentally, it is not likely that evangelical churches and sound orthodox belief will tend to free a man from the bondage of his lower nature, and raise him to a higher moral state, I say, Yes. They are excellent tools to work with. Nevertheless, as many a farmer has had a barn full of tools which he did not use, and has had poor crops, so orthodoxy and evangelical organizations may have but little power on the earth. You may spread them round and round the globe; and yet, Christianity may not spread. Christianity works vertically as well as horizontally. It spreads over the earth—for everywhere Christ is to be known and preached; but it spreads in the *proportion* in which it elevates the whole nature of each individual man. And it elevates him in the proportion in which it holds the emphasis of authority in his estimation. With us authority is in the physical and material part of our nature. We are amplified and refined as we go up and begin to hold in check all the physical endowments; all the social elements; all the interests of pride and vanity; all the degrading effects of organized society-life. We are not Christian until we rise so high that it is not even the affections that rule any more—until we rise so high that the moral sentiments are supreme. It is love in all its benignities and beneficences, it is faith in all its idealities and aspirations, it

is hope in all its courage and cheerfulness and buoyancy, that constitutes Christianity. Christianity is not as flat as uncorked beer, as many people seem to think it is. A man who merely does not do any hurt—is he a Christian? A man that is simply harmless—is he a Christian? Then a griddle-cake is a better Christian than anything else. It does not do any hurt. Let it get cold, and it will not even burn you. There are many men who are flat, cold, stale, and unprofitable; and it is supposed, because they do not do any harm, that they are Christians. No! A Christian sparkles. He is full of fire; but it is a fire that does not burn. He is full of power; but it is a power that does not thunder. He is full of life; but it is a life that develops itself in higher and not in lower forms—in things that go to make him a man in Christ Jesus.

If you think that when Christianity comes into a man's soul, it makes him smaller, if you think it minifies him, you are mistaken. When Christianity comes into a man's soul it magnifies him; it enlarges him; it ennobles him. When you become a Christian, you simply shift the balance of power, taking it out of the hand, and putting it into the brain; taking it out of the lower nature, and putting it into the higher reason, into the love principle, and into the spiritualizing elements. And when a man has changed the seat of authority so that that which is above dominates, then he has become a Christian.

Can a man become a Christian without acknowledging Christ? Just as far toward it as an apple can ripen without acknowledging the sun. An apple can grow, and get size, and get shape, and get juice without the shining of the sun; but I will defy any apple to get sweetness out of that juice, I will defy any apple to change its sour sap into sweet sap, until it has had the sun shining on it. And no man can become a Christian without the supernal light.

But I believe many a man gets that light who does not know where he gets it. In other words, that which I believe to be Christ, many a man calls "God," or "Father;" and he gets that divine light, that ripening spiritual influence, by which the sour sap changes to saccharine sap. So that a man may recognize not the name, but only the power; and getting the power, he gets the thing. Yet, no man can be a Christian except under the influence of the light which comes from above.

You may carry a lighted candle into a conservatory; but it will coax out no blossom. If, however, you let the sun shine in on the plants, a thousand blossoms will come out at once. And there is no mere human element that will ever bring out the blossoms of the soul. You must get the Sun of Righteousness to shine into the soul if you would have it blossom.

A man may stumble about a name, or about a philosophy; but the

thing itself is that which develops the lower part of a man, and that without which there is no development of it.

2. If you look at it in this way, there has been an immense development made toward the ascendancy of the moral elements in this world. Consider where, in the time of our Saviour, when he said, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth," the great elements of power resided. All modern Europe had no existence, to all intents and purposes. Hispania lay in darkness. All Italy lay in paganism. It was strong in military and art elements; but it was heathen. It was powerful, but cruel and hard. Rome was the insignia of power, with a stronger element of the physical than of the intellectual or the moral. Gaul was a vast wilderness. All Britain was, as it were, sunk below the horizon. And this continent was not known. The power lay in Italy; in Greece; in Palestine. In them was the substantial power of the world. They were all heathen. Everything else was gloom, *gloom!*

Two thousand years have nearly passed away. Rome has gone under. Greece has gone under. Palestine has gone under. Egypt has gone under. Syria has gone under. The elevations have all sunk below the level. You cannot see them anywhere. And what have come up? The nations that are the most Christian; the nations that represent the highest moral ideas; all Christian nations which are highest, which are freest, which are best governed.

Where is life securest? Where is property most facile of acquirement, and most stable in using? In those nations that reach highest up in intelligent Christianity. I do not say it for the sake of invidious comparisons; but show me a nation in which Christianity is most in its ecclesiasticisms, in which it is most in hierarchal hands, and I will show you a nation that is lower in industry, lower in thrift, and lower in the popular power, than nations contiguous, in which the heart is unbound, and the understanding is enlightened, and the conscience is free. Just in proportion as nations have developed the higher qualities of the moral nature of man, they have gone up in power, and, I think, are to go up.

There have been some elements developed in our great struggle which we ought not to forbear to emphasize. In the first place, there are nations on the globe that have been warring from time immemorial; but there is not one of them that could ever have gathered such armies for so long a period of time—armies, too, that could be gathered only by the consent of the governed—as were gathered in this nation. Such armies could not be gathered except in a nation where the reason and conscience were free, and where religion had been the culture of the people from the very cradle. And when they were

gathered, what patience and long endurance were required to support them! What vast tides of taxes were demanded! These taxes had to be voted by the men that paid them; and yet, how they flowed in like Gulf Streams! And how did men's fortitude grow to the last! For I think the people were never so determined as in the later stages of this war. The rulers, for the most part, were fainter hearted than the people. And it was one of the significant excellences of that man whose head lies low to-day, that, standing in a place of eminent authority, he was fully up to, and really beyond the courage and determination of the great common people. He was that man who gave power, and faith, and marrow, and force, to all the departments of government. I think we owe more to Edwin M. Stanton for the final victories of the struggle, than to any or all other men that wielded pen or sword. And I believe that by-and-by, his name, instead of being covered with clouds and going lower, will rise from those prejudices which came from an infelicitous manner, and stand higher and higher among the stars in our patriotic firmament, not far from the great unquenched orb of Washington.

Consider, too, how, since the paroxysm, the confusion and the passion of our great conflict have passed away, the conscience of the nation has stood steadfastly to national equity. Our war, like all wars, threw up mire and dirt. I think there has been a vast amount of evil occasioned by the war. We are now combatting pecuniary briberies which came from the immense contract system of the army. And consider how, though we are tainted and specked here and there, that fundamental integrity which has had so long a fight, maintains itself still, and is bound that faith shall be kept with every creditor of the nation. There are thirty millions of people, widely divided by parties; and large sections of them are interested to destroy the credit of the loan occasioned by the war; but such is the force of moral principle in this nation, that, though free as the wind, they stand as firm as the hills, and say, "*Faith shall be kept!*" Where has that conscience come from? What education has brought us to it? Here is a democratic people, free in institutions, free in laws, and whose word is law—for who shall gainsay the omnipotence of the decisions of this people; and yet, they are not coerced, nor bribed, nor intimidated; but by some inward moving principle, they have said, "FAITH SHALL BE KEPT!"

Are these things to be unmarked? Has the end come to such ideas of national conscience? It is the freest nation of the globe that says these things. I affirm that at no former period of the world could such a phenomenon have been found. And this is one of the indications that the nation itself is more Christianized than people think. There is yet a great deal to be done yet. We are not a perfect nation.

What I am interested to show, is, that we are growing in the right direction, and that Christianity is doing its work. I desire to show, not that we have become meek, but that we are developing in the direction of meekness—that we are rising from the animal, through the social and intellectual, toward the moral and the spiritual elements!

In looking over the world, I see, not alone in this, but in every department of life, as society is organized, the development of the same traits. Business begins to develop them. It has become almost a truism that no art is permanent that has not a moral element in it. The same thing is true in regard to pleasure. Pleasures do not satisfy which have not in them a moral element. It is so with business. It is coming to be understood there are rights in business. It is so, likewise in diplomacy. Diplomacy is no longer the cunning thing that it has been. Whereas it used to be a trap in whose meshes men sought to catch each other, it is now becoming honest in every direction. And you shall find that all through the various organizations of society the same tendency is manifesting itself. Development is everywhere along the same line—from the lower toward the higher; from the animal and coarse, toward the moral and spiritual; from the law of violence, toward the law of reason and right.

And this development is broader than it ever was. It is in its youth yet. It is full of activity. And the world is going on to fulfill the declaration of Christ, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." By-and-by—slowly—the time is coming when men will be more honored than they ever were. The time is coming when good men that have power withal will stand higher than ever. The time is coming when we shall have good men everywhere. The last thing I suppose, that will be conquered, will be the temptations of the State itself. The temptations of power, and the temptations which cluster around the revenues, are so great that it is hard for human nature to stand up under them; and the last thing, probably, that will be truly just and truly spiritual, will be the administration of laws and political trusts. And yet, by-and-by the time will come when we shall have better magistrates, and better legislators, and better administrators, throughout society. And then business, in all its parts, will work from the law of force up to the law of right; pleasure will work up; literature will work up; art will work up; and administration itself will work up. By-and-by the time will come when good men, sublime and sweet, will be dominant in all the earth.

Some men call this the *millenium*. Call it what you will. It is the ripeness of the race. It is the final state toward which all people are working. It is said of the Master that "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem;" and the world's face, to-day, is *as though it*

would go toward the New Jerusalem. The way is dark, but it is opening. More and more the lines of light are appearing. It is twilight yet; but the sun is not far below the horizon. Come, O Sun of Righteousness! Arise, with healing in thy beams!

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We are drawn to thee, our Heavenly Father. Even as the flowers are drawn to the sun, they know not why, so our souls rise toward thee, without thinking—without the consciousness of foregoing want—by the direction of thy nature; by the want of our own which answers to thine. And so, unconsciously, we cry, “Abba, Father.” So in our deepest want, and in our highest joy, thou art our Friend—the Friend that feeds the soul, and meets its want and aspiration, and gives it joy. We have so long known thee, we have so long felt thy presence, thy life has so long been mixed with ours, that we begin to know something of that divine unity which thou hast promised us. And it is nothing of ourselves, but that of thee which is in us, which gives us patience and forbearance against provocation; which raises us, when men assault us, into joy, rather than plunges us into sorrow; which takes from us the hurt and the sting of humiliation in bankruptcy and loss; which brings us near to thee, by the things which men call *destroying*. It is thy spirit which is unsealing the eye; which is opening boundless riches beyond and above the senses. It is thy spirit which is making the vast and the impalpable clear and easily to be discerned by that inward nature of ours. It is thy spirit that is peopling the heavens, and bringing forth to our summons multitudes, among whom fly blessed spirits that were our own, that have been released from the imprisoning body, that dwell with thee, and that are above the stars, and brighter than they, and are as the children of God. And yet, they are ours—ours by memory; ours by yearning; ours by all our heart-claspings; and ours forever, because they are thine. They are God’s; and all things that are his are thine; and all that is thine is ours—for we are one with thee.

We rejoice that thus, not according to the measure of our knowledge, but according to the measure of thine own knowledge, thou art filling us with all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Thou art dealing thy mercies out to us, not according to the measure of desire on our part, but according to the measure of thine own wisdom. As we deal with our children, and do for them, and compel them to do the things which we know will ennoble their manhood, and plant thick now the seeds which shall bring forth the fruit of joy by-and-by, overruling their impatience, and disappointing their hopes to-day; so art thou acting according to thy wisdom, and overruling our short-sighted desires, and quenching our prayers with sorrows that seem to us enmities at the time, but which abound in the love of God, and bring forth glorious fruit in us by-and-by. We have learned that no affliction is for the present joyous, but grievous, but that afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby,

O thou God of the dark hand! smite on. O thou God of the mysterious wisdom! still legislate for us. O thou round about whose throne are clouds and darkness! ride forth, and be supreme over us and all the earth. Thy will be done. Though our pride tremble; though our selfishness weary itself with resistance; though our vanity is pierced, and means; though our inordinate affections suffer, thy will be done. Yet deal gently. Build us up not too fast. Let us not be quite destroyed when we are cast down. Lift us again from beneath thy bruising blow, and thy wounds, and bring us health, that we may rejoice in the mercy of our God. Thou wilt. Thou wilt not forget the bruised reed. Thou art so gentle that thine utmost desire breathed forth shall not quench the smoking flax until thou bring forth judgment unto victory.

Even so, Lord Jesus, we surrender ourselves to thy care. We pray for thy watching. We implore thy spirit to be breathed on all our inward life. We ask that we may live

in such a spiritual vision that heaven shall be apparent, and that we may see Him who is invisible, and that we may dominate the earth by the power of faith in the world to come.

Draw near, we beseech of thee, to all those whose outward strength fails; to those who drink a bitter cup; to those whose burden seems at times greater than they can bear. Thou with inward strength canst gird them for the battle, and cause them, when they have done all, still to stand and be steadfast unto the end. But grant that troubles and sorrows may not come and go without benefit. May we not be so afraid of being afflicted, as of being afflicted without profit. May all our sorrows ripen us. Even as acerb fruits late in autumn will not sweeten until the frost has fallen upon them, and then they turn their glowing cheek to the sun, and grow rich; so when thou dost send thy frosts upon us, grant that we may grow sweeter and riper under them. May we be more gentle and have more faith in invisible things. May the outward world have less dominion over our senses. May we count manhood to be higher up. May we seek the things which are above, at the right hand of God, where Christ sitteth.

And so we pray that thou wilt grant to us, during this year upon which we are soon to enter, more blessings than thou hast during the year which is issuing and perishing. Thou hast made this year one of great mercies; but we pray that we may more than ever grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thou hast blessed this church, and gathered into it multitudes of such as shall be saved; but we beseech of thee that this year may be barren of blessings to this church, as compared with the year which is to come. More may there be that shall be brought from darkness to light; more singing souls may there be that shall rejoice in the new-found mercy of God. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt come and bring joy into all our dwellings. And if we wear the garments of affliction, still we beseech of thee that we may have joy in our sorrow, and songs in our night.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all our families. May they be more and more households of faith. May they be more and more gates of heaven to us. And we pray that all the sanctities of love may abound in them. And may we be nourished as in thine own peculiar church, and in thy very favored dwelling. In every household may we be nourished, so that we shall be fitted for that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

We pray for our land. Grant, we beseech of thee, that thy blessing may rest upon the President of these United States, and upon all who are associated with him in authority; upon Congress assembled; upon the Legislatures of the various States; upon all courts and magistrates. And grant that all that hold office may be men who shall fear God, and whom God shall love. And grant, we pray thee, that as one, another whom thou hast ordained with great strength and wisdom are passing away, we may not be unmindful of thy favors to us in the men of our day who have born the burden and the heat thereof manfully. We thank thee for so many who have set examples to men, of integrity, and of might in well-doing. And we pray that there may be found others upon whom their mantle shall worthily fall. Let us not be left unrich in manhood. Destroy our ships; destroy our dwellings; but grant that poverty may not come upon manhood in this nation. Raise up nobler men—men that shall scorn bribes; men that shall not run greedily to ambition; men that shall not be devoured by selfishness; men that shall fear God and love man; men that shall love this nation with a pure and disinterested love. And so we beseech of thee that our peace may stand firm upon integrity, and that righteousness may everywhere prevail. And in its greatness save this nation from cruelty. May we not imitate the bad examples which we abhor, and lift up the hand of our might to beat down the weak and the needy. At last may there be found one nation dwelling in peace, that shall stand to succor and defend the nations of the earth, and to spread abroad all the blessings which are in Christ Jesus. And so may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done in all the earth, that wars shall cease, that ignorance shall flee away, that superstition shall die, that intelligence, and virtue, and piety shall thrive, and that thy supremacy shall be established on the earth.

And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

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